Trading Technology

NASA JSC Inspection Day reaps technology rewards for business, space scientists

Last month's NASA JSC Inspection was successful in allowing JSC to share its technology with business, and it produced a spinoff of its own, allowing businesses to share their technology with the center.

More than 1,200 top executives from companies in 28 states took advantage of the opportunity to learn about JSC's missions, technologies and facilities.

"Our center employees should take great pride in the inspection and technology they presented to our visitors," JSC Director George Abbey said. "The NASA JSC Inspection was an important step in helping assure that industry, other government organizations and the public reap the benefits of our investment in the space program.

"The comments we received through exit surveys and personal remarks made directly to me, gave JSC very high marks on the content of the exhibits and demonstrations, the information we shared about JSC programs and missions and our efforts to transfer the technology developed here to the private sector. Above all we received high marks and many, many comments on the courtesy, the tremendous competency and enthusiasm of our people for their work," Abbey said.

Organizers report that invited guests came from the manufacturing, engineering, medical, architecture, chemical, transportation, petroleum, energy and computer industries and from cities as disparate as Dallas, Orlando, Seattle and New York City.

"The Inspection Days concept seemed to be an overwhelming success," wrote Jimmy Glotfelty, director of the state of Texas technology policy. "It will surely help send a message of NASA's cooperation and expertise to our Texas residents and communities."

"All the fine people at JSC went all out to make sure the technology of the center was on its best display," wrote David Carr, chairman of the Texas Aerospace Commission to his colleagues. "We hope that there will be many more Inspection Days at JSC and I urge everyone to make our friends aware of NASA's great capability for technology commercialization."

Numerous success stories are filtering in from the volunteers who supported the exhibits and demonstrations. But one of the more successful stories from Inspection Day comes from the Manufacturing, Materials and Process Technology Division.

"During the two-day event we got a chance to share a lot of our technologies with other business," said Division Chief Frank Benz. "We also were happy to learn that businesses were willing to share their technologies with us."

One exhibit on display from the division was the circuit writer. Electronics technician Randy Roman described to visitors how JSC is the only beta test site in the country for this system, that allows JSC to develop prototype circuit boards for use in flight and ground system hardware. A visitor from IBM saw the exhibit and was impressed with the capabilities of the circuit writer and how NASA is advancing in this electronic area. He asked Roman if JSC could benefit from technology that would improve the time required to conduct functional testing. Roman and his colleagues agreed that such a system would save hundreds of hours in the development of circuit boards. As a result of Inspection Day, JSC will be working with IBM in the months to come to identify technologies that will shorten the time required to get circuit boards from the development stage to manufacturing.

Abbey added that employee involvement is what made the event success.

"I want to express my thanks to all of the exhibitors, facility hosts, volunteers and inspection staff members that did such a tremendous job as witnessed by the many favorable comments we received about their knowledge and understanding of their fields and their ability to suggest possible applications for NASA developed technology to help these visiting executives solve problems or develop products," Abbey said. "This is exactly what we hoped to accomplish, and each and every one of those who pitched in and made this event an unqualified success should take great pride in their accomplishments."

From top to bottom, left to right;

1) Several visitors check out NASA's T-38 training aircraft avionics upgrade at Ellington Field;

2) Robert Brogdon of the International Space Station Program Office discusses the International Space Station with visitors;

3) Dan Barta, right, of the Crew and Thermal Systems Division, explains closed-environment plant growth development. JSC grows plants in closed environments for atmosphere revitalization;

4) Several business leaders take time out to visit the Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory at the Sonny Carter Training Facility;

5) Joe Riccio of the Manufacturing, Materials and Process Technology Division demonstrates a new laboratory devoted to manufacturing very small parts;

6) Tom Grace of the Advanced Programs Office discusses the Reusable Lunar Transfer Vehicle with a JSC employee. The vehicle is designed to shuttle astronauts from low-Earth orbit to the Moon's surface and back;

7) From left, White Sands Test Facility Manager Grady McCright explains the New Mexico facility to a JSC employee as Ray Melton talks about the shuttle reaction control system thruster to a visitor;

8) Jerry Wiese of Johnson Engineering shows visitors the equipment used to help the astronauts simulate weightlessness;

9) Peg Halford of Lockheed-Martin, who supports the Crew Escape Equipment group, shows visitors how astronauts use crew escape equipment during missions;

10) Mark Cintala of the Earth Science and Solar System Exploration Division gives a preview of the evidence discovered by JSC scientists that strongly suggest life on Mars existed